

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

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FM AMCONSUL BELIZE

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

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AMEMBASSY MEXICO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA IMMEDIATE

USCINCSO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BELIZE 0401

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR GT BH UK

SUBJECT: REPORT OF PLANNED GUATEMALAN MILITARY EXERCISES ON
BELIZE BORDER

1. GOVERNOR MCENTEE WHO CAME TO LUNCH AT RESIDENCE TODAY, TOLD ME IN PRE-LUNCH SESSION IN MY OFFICE THAT HE WAS DEEPLY DISTURBED BY A REPORT HE HAD JUST RECEIVED THAT GUATEMALAN ARMY AND AIR FORCE WOULD SHORTLY BE ENGAGING IN JOINT MILITARY EXERCISES LASTING A WEEK OR SO IN THE PETEN AREA. GOVERNOR, WHO SEEMED RATHER TENSE, SAID HE HAD JUST THIS MORNING RECEIVED THIS INFORMATION FROM BRITISH CONSUL MACQUILLAN IN GUATEMALA CITY WHO HAD BEEN OFFICIALLY NOTIFIED TO THIS EFFECT YESTERDAY BY THE GUATEMALAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. GOVERNOR SAID THESE EXERCISES HAD NOT BEEN PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED IN GUATEMALA AND CONSEQUENTLY SOURCE SHOULD BE PROTECTED.

2. HE HAD JUST COME FROM A MEETING WITH COL JOHN HEAD, COMMANDER, BRITISH FORCES AT WHICH LATTER'S COMBAT READINESS HAD
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BEEN THE SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION.

3. IN REPLY TO MY QUESTION AS TO WHAT INTERPRETATION HE THOUGHT SHOULD BE PLACED ON THIS DEVELOPMENT, HE SAID TWO INTERPRETATIONS SEEMED POSSIBLE. FIRST WAS THAT IT WAS SIMPLY A CASE OF SABRE RATTLING, A GESTURE WHICH PRESIDENT LAUGERUD MAY HAVE CONCLUDED WAS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO GAIN A DEGREE OF CREDIBILITY FOR HIS

JUNE 12 STATEMENT, WHICH GOVERNOR UNDERSTOOD HAD MET WITH CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM AND EVEN SOME RIDICULE IN GUATEMALA AND NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. HE ALSO SPECULATED THAT GOG MAY HAVE DECIDED SOME RATTLING OF SABRES WOULD BE A USEFUL TACTIC IN PREPARATION FOR JULY TALKS ALTHOUGH HE SAID HE FOUND THE LOGIC OF THIS RATHER HARD TO FOLLOW.

4. THE SECOND POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION, WHICH HE SAID HE PERSONALLY THOUGHT WAS LESS LIKELY THAN THE OTHER BUT WHICH HE COULD NOT RESPONSIBLY DISMISS, WAS THAT THE SO-CALLED EXERCISES MIGHT BE A SMOKE SCREEN TO COVER PREPARATIONS FOR SOME SORT OF ACTUAL MILITARY OPERATION AGAINST BELIZE. "IT JUST WOULD NOT DO" SAID THE GOVERNOR, FOR THE BRITISH FORCES TO BE SURPRISED BY SUCH A MOVE; IT WAS IMPERATIVE THAT THEY BE READY FOR ANY CONTINGENCY. I ASKED THE GOVERNOR WHETHER THIS MEANT WE MIGHT BE SEEING THE HARRIERS BACK IN BELIZEAN SKIES AGAIN SOON. HE LAUGHED RATHER UNCOMFORTABLY AND DIGRESSED TO SAY THAT HE AND COL HEAD WERE VERY, VERY CLOSE BUT THAT THERE WAS THE USUAL OLD DICHOTOMY BETWEEN POLITICAL AS OPPOSED TO MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS. THE DECISION AS TO WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WOULD BE UP TO HMG, BUT THAT IN COMMENTING TO FCO ON MACQUILLAN'S REPORT HE HAD EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF NOT JEOPARDIZING THE UK-GUATEMALA TALKS SET FOR JULY.

6.1 GOVERNOR ALSO TOOK THE OCCASION TO REVIEW RECENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT RE BELIZE IN LONDON, WASHINGTON AND GRANADA. I
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ASKED HIM IF HE KNEW WHAT THE OFFICIAL HMG REACTION HAD BEEN TO THE STANCE THE U. S. WAS TAKING IN RESPONSE TO HMG APPEAL FOR SUPPORT IN ITS CURRENT EFFORT TO GET THE DISPUTE USETTLED. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE FCO HAD FOUND THE U. S. POSITION ENCOURAGING AND AND THAT OUR RESPONSE SO FAR HAD BEEN "NOT BY ANY MEANS UNHELPFUL." HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT HE THOUGHT WASHINGTON WAS HAVING A HARD TIME COMPREHENDING THE DIFFICULTY OF EVEN A COMPARATIVELY SMALL CESSION OF TERRITORY IN VIEW OF THE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT GENERATED IN THE PAST YEAR OR SO FOR THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF BELIZE. HE EXPLAINED THAT HE DID NOT MEAN TO SUGGEST THAT THE BRITISH WOULD BE INTRACTABLE ON THE CESSION ISSUE AND HE FELT SURE THAT IF THAT WERE THE ONLY REMAINING PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED IN REACHING AN AGREEMENT WITH GOG HE THOUGHT HMG WOULD BE WILLING TO URGE PREMIER PRICE TO AGREE TO TRY TO PERSUADE THE BELIZEAN PEOPLE TO SUPPORT A SMALL CESSION. IF PRICE REFUSED, HOWEVER, HE DOUBTED THAT HMG WOULD TRY TO COERCE HIM.

7. COMMENT. THE ANNUAL EUCALATORY CYCLE SEEMS TO BE GETTING UNDERWAY EARLY THIS YEAR. MORE DISTURBING THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS IS CONCERN I DETECT AMONG THE BRITISH HERE, BASED ON JUNE 12 STATEMENT OF PRESIDENT LAUGERUD AND ILLOGICAL TIMING

OF PUTATIVE GUATEMALAN MILITARY EXERCISES, THAT PREUENT LEADER-
SHIP OF GOG IS NOT BEHAVING RATIONALLY EVEN IN TERMS OF ITS
OWN INTERESTS.
GAWF

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